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NEWS CONFERENCE

#733

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH PIERRE SALINGER

SEPTEMBER 4, 1962

6:10 P.M.

EDT

TUESDAY

MR. SALINGER: I am going to read a statement, which is a statement of the President.

"All Americans, as well as all of our friends in this hemisphere, have been concerned over the recent moves of the Soviet Union to bolster the military power of the Castro regime in Cuba. Information has reached this Government in the last four days" --

Q. Are you giving us paragraphs?

MR. SALINGER: I will.

Q. Is there a "that"?

MR. SALINGER: "Information has reached this Government in the last four days from a variety of sources which establishes without doubt that the Soviets have provided the Cuban Government with a number of antiaircraft defense missiles with a slant range of 25 miles which are similar to early models of our NIKE. Along with these missiles, the Soviets are apparently providing the extensive radar and other electronic equipment which is required for their operation. We can also confirm the presence of several Soviet-made motor torpedo boats carrying ship-to-ship guided missiles having a range of 15 miles. The number of Soviet military technicians now known to be in Cuba or enroute -- approximately 3,500 -- is consistent with assistance in setting up and learning to use this equipment. As I stated last week, we shall continue to make information available as fast as it is obtained and properly verified.

"There is no evidence of any organized combat force in Cuba from any Soviet-bloc country; of military bases provided to Russia;" --

Q. Don't you mean "by"?

Q. They are not making any available.

Q. They are not giving any bases to Russia.

MR. SALINGER: --"to Russia; of a violation of the 1934 treaty relating to Guantanamo; of the presence of offensive ground-to-ground missiles; or of other significant offensive capability either in Cuban hands or under Soviet direction and guidance. Were it to be otherwise, the gravest issues would arise.

"The Cuban question must be considered as a part of the worldwide challenge posed by Communist threats to the peace. It must be dealt with as a part of

that larger issue as well as in the context of the special relationships which have long characterized the inter-American system.

"It continues to be the policy of the United States that the Castro regime will not be allowed to export its aggressive purposes by force or the threat of force. It will be prevented by whatever means may be necessary from taking action against any part of the Western Hemisphere. The United States, in conjunction with other hemisphere countries, will make sure that while increased Cuban armaments will be a heavy burden to the unhappy people of Cuba themselves, they will be nothing more."

Q. Pierre, was this statement discussed this afternoon with the leaders of both parties?

MR. SALINGER: The situation, the current situation, in Cuba, as well as the information contained in the statement, was discussed by the President with the Secretary of State and other key officials of the Administration, with a bipartisan group of leaders from both Houses of Congress here at the White House immediately prior to the release of this statement.

Q. Who were the members?

MR. SALINGER: I will read the names of those who were present.

Senators Mansfield, Fulbright, Russell, Sparkman, Dirksen, Kuchel, Hickenlooper, and Wiley.

Representatives: The Speaker, the Majority Leader, Vinson, Selden, Halleck, Arends, and Chiperfield.

Q. Was anybody else from the Cabinet besides the Secretary of State there? Mr. McNamara?

MR. SALINGER: Secretary McNamara was present; that is correct.

Q. How long did this meeting last?

MR. SALINGER: About one hour.

Q. Did the President ask what they thought of this statement or did he read it to them?

MR. SALINGER: No, the statement was not read to them. The information which it contained was given to them.

Q. Is it correct to infer that the entire tenor of the statement is to make it clear that the Cuban build-up at the moment, so far, is defensive or defensive weapons?

MR. SALINGER: I think the statement speaks for itself, Ralph.

Q. Is the implication of the statement, Pierre, that so long as it remains defensive, you are not going to do anything about it?

MR. SALINGER: The statement speaks for itself. I do not intend to go beyond the statement.

Q. What is "slant range"?

MR. SALINGER: For BACKGROUND:

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It means it can't go straight up 25 miles.

Q. It means horizontal distance?

MR. SALINGER: That is right.

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Q. None of the Soviet landbased missiles of which this Government is aware could be used to hit the mainland of the United States?

MR. SALINGER: Again, I think we have described what the missiles were that we currently have information on.

Q. Thank you, sir.

Q. Is that the end?

MR. SALINGER: That is the end.

END